



For Immediate Release
December 11, 2007
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Webinars provide modern-day training for Iraqis

By Jenna Bisenius
Gulf Region South District

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Thanks to a recent webinar program for Iraqis, Baghdad construction professionals have been receiving valuable up-to-the-minute training on the latest construction techniques and methodology. This training is being sponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division and the Baghdad Group of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Courses have included instruction on in-demand topics such as project management, reinforced masonry, repair of concrete structures, project work plans, renovation of slabs on grade, and fundamentals of design-build contracting.

The webinars, usually about two hours in length, are a form of distance learning and are helping to provide Iraqis with the latest industry information presented by subject matter experts located worldwide. By tapping into today's technology, security concerns related to travel within Iraq can be circumvented and Iraqis are able to safely obtain the latest in construction management training without extensive travel or risk.

Typically, students gather in a classroom to view a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation via an internet connection. At the same time, an instructor based elsewhere speaks to the class over a speakerphone in a conference call-type setting.

At present, class attendees gather in a designated conference room in Baghdad's

International Zone, with students from elsewhere in Iraq sometimes dialing in. Class size has ranged from 15 to 35 attendees.

Since the speaker is live, students are able to ask questions, providing two-way interaction not possible with regular courseware material such as books or electronic presentations. In addition to live instruction, a translator is available to ease the interaction between the instructor and the students and explains concepts unfamiliar to the participants.

The combination of a live instructor and translation assistance provides a richer, fuller and more dynamic learning environment for class attendees according to the female expatriate GRD training manager overseeing the webinars.

"The response from the Iraqi attendees has been overwhelmingly positive," she said. "Each program continues to grow in attendance, and in response we are looking at adding a webinar site at the Iraqi Ministry of Construction and Housing. It's a great way for Iraqi construction professionals to get the skills they need to remain current in today's construction world."

Since February, six webinars have been conducted. The GRD training manager said the goal is to provide 10 to 12 webinars per year depending on instructor availability.

Note: Jenna Bisenius is a contract employee with the Gulf Region Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Iraq. For information, contact Grant Sattler, public affairs specialist, at 540-665-1233 or email requests to CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil. For more on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq, visit www.grd.usace.army.mil.